

Missed Opportunities: Pregnant and Parenting Youth Experiences of Homelessness in the US

Foundational evidence for understanding the scale, scope, and urgency of homelessness among pregnant and parenting youth in America

May 2018

Our nation's young families deserve the best possible start in life. Every day of housing instability and the associated stress represents a missed opportunity to support healthy development and transitions to stable family life. Voices of Youth Count gives voice to young people across America who lack the support they need to achieve independence and to make transitions to productive adulthood.

Missed Opportunities: Pregnant and Parenting Youth Homelessness in America is among the first national assessments of the increased risks that pregnant and parenting young people face when they experience homelessness. The number of youth who are pregnant or parenting and also homeless is substantial. Many of these young mothers and fathers have their children with them while they experience homelessness.

Although young families often seek and receive support, some young parents struggle to obtain shelter or transitional housing because the homeless service providers in their community only serve single mothers or married couples with children. This makes it difficult for many young families, including single fathers, to stay together while receiving services. Fortunately, by designing holistic services to support families and their developmental needs, we can have a positive impact on two generations. **No more missed opportunities.**

A substantial number of children are being raised by young parents experiencing homelessness



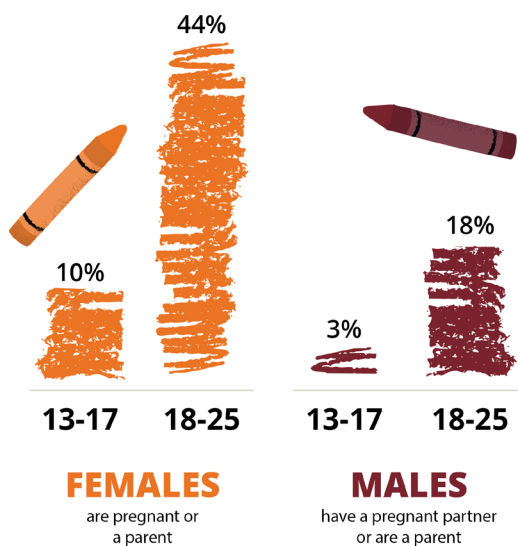
Approximately

1.1 MILLION CHILDREN

had a young parent who experienced homelessness during the past year.

(Source: VoYC National Survey)

Pregnancy and parenthood are common among youth experiencing homelessness



(Source: VoYC Brief Youth Survey)

Recommendations

1. Address the sexual and reproductive health needs of youth experiencing homelessness by adapting evidence-based pregnancy prevention programs and providing contraception plus prenatal and post-partum care in nontraditional settings.
2. Increase collaboration among homeless service providers and providers in other systems, including early childhood, early intervention, education, and welfare.
3. Explore opportunities for family reunification, relationship building, and service engagement with youth experiencing homelessness who are pregnant or parenting.
4. Develop the capacity of homeless youth and homeless family service providers to serve all young mothers and fathers who are homeless, regardless of their gender, age, or marital status.
5. Design support programs that recognize the importance of the relationships pregnant and parenting youth have with their partners and co-parents.
6. Assess the risk for homelessness among pregnant and parenting youth and refer high-risk youth for appropriate services when they are identified.